

10 Things You Can Do for National Radon Action Week: A Resource Guide

Introduction and Instructions

We know that radon is a health risk facing millions of Americans. Our job is to make sure America's citizens and families know this, and to motivate them to test their homes for radon, reduce elevated levels when they are found, and build new homes with radon-resistant features. The US EPA has pulled together this resource guide for use by the Cooperative Partner Network, which is comprised of national, state and local governments, non-profit organizations and educational institutions, as we all continue our outreach efforts on this important health issue.

US EPA headquarters and the National Cooperative Partners are committed to several National Radon Action Week (NRAW) activities again this year. But EPA headquarters activities can only reach out so far. The most impactful action is taken at the local level and begins with local affiliates. This resource guide is designed as a tool for you to use to take action right where you live. National Radon Action Week is about just that: getting into our communities, connecting with local media, businesses, and civic groups, and conducting activities that will make real progress toward reducing radon risks in American homes.

A common myth about NRAW is that all state and local radon activities must take place during this particular week. This is not the case. In fact, NRAW is simply the kickoff week of an entire year of activities designed to increase awareness of radon's serious health effects, encourage Americans to take action on radon in their homes, and ultimately reduce health risks posed to Americans by radon. If you decide these activities are better suited to occur later for your area, please feel free to plan accordingly.

This resource guide is presented to you as one tool to help you prepare for National Radon Action Week in 2000 and beyond. It is an informal set of sample letters and ideas for various outreach projects. The sample letters in this guide are just that, samples. All sample materials contained in this guide have been designed to be localized for distribution to media in your area. Feel free to add or delete language, combine projects, or even better, be inspired to invent your own new projects!

For additional information on National Radon Action Week, you may contact your national **[organization]** at **[phone number, E-mail address]** or by visiting EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/radon/nraw.html>.

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Reproducible Radon Fact Sheets

Fact sheets can serve a number of purposes. They can be useful tools for pitching stories to the media; they can lead to story ideas and help a reporter or anchor develop an accurate story; they can be used as handouts at your National Radon Action Week activities or other radon activities; and fact sheets can be sent out with any mailers that you do. The following is a list of radon facts, radon questions and answers, and radon myths dispelled. You may reproduce these fact sheets onto your own letterhead, or modify them by adding local data or information about your radon activities. The facts are here; how you choose to use them is up to you!

Basic Radon Facts

What is Radon?

Radon is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless gas that comes from deposits of uranium in soil, rock, and water. It is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor air, but when trapped in buildings, can be harmful, especially at elevated levels. Radon is a radioactive decay product of radium, which is itself a decay product of uranium. Uranium and radium are both common elements in soil.

Where is Radon Found?

The primary source of high levels of radon in homes is the surrounding soil. Radon has been found in elevated levels in homes in every state, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that as many as one in 15 homes across the U.S. have elevated radon levels.

How Does Radon Get Into My House?

Warm air rises. When this happens in your home, it creates a vacuum in the lower areas of the house. Nature hates a vacuum, so something must rush in to fill it. In the case of your home, air seeps in from the soil around and under the house, and some air is sucked in through openings (cracks, doors, windows) on the lower levels. Radon gas enters the same way air and other soil gases enter the home; through cracks in the foundation floor or walls, hollow-block walls, and openings around floor drains, pipes and sump pumps.

What are the Health Effects of Radon?

Exposure to radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. Radon can be inhaled into the lungs, where it undergoes radioactive decay. As it decays, radon releases tiny bursts of energy called alpha particles, which can harm sensitive lung tissue by damaging the DNA. This damaged DNA can lead to lung cancer.

How is Radon Measured?

Radon is measured in picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L), a measurement of radioactivity. The U.S. EPA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that homes with radon levels 4 pCi/L, or greater, be fixed.

How do I Find Out if My House has Elevated Levels of Radon?

Radon test kits that meet EPA guidelines can be obtained from a radon testing company or laboratory. Get a listing from your state radon office or local health department by calling **[insert state radon or health department phone number here]**. They are available at local hardware stores and home improvement stores. Many are priced under \$25.00. Testing your home for radon is as simple as opening a package, placing a radon detector in a designated

area, and, after the prescribed number of days, sealing the detector back in the package and mailing it to a lab. Information on testing your home for radon and how to get a test kit is also available by calling 1-800-SOS-RADON.

The cost of making repairs to reduce radon depends on how your home was built and other factors. Most homes can be fixed for about the same cost as other common home repairs, like painting or having a new hot water heater installed. The average cost for a contractor to lower radon levels in a home is about \$1,200, although this can range from \$500 to about \$2,500.

How Can I Fix My House if it has Elevated Levels of Radon?

A variety of methods can be used to reduce radon in homes. Sealing cracks and other openings in the foundation is a basic part of most approaches to radon reduction. EPA does not recommend the use of sealing and caulking alone to reduce radon because, by itself, sealing has not been shown to lower radon levels significantly or consistently. In most cases, systems with pipes and fans are used to reduce radon. Such systems are called “sub-slab depressurization”. These systems prevent radon gas from entering the home from below the concrete floor and the foundation. Similar systems can also be installed in homes with crawl spaces. Radon reduction contractors may use other methods that may also work in your home, depending on its design and other factors. Look in the Yellow Pages or call your state radon office to locate radon mitigators in your area.

Dispelling Some Common Radon Myths

“I don’t have a basement, so I probably don’t have a radon problem.”

Radon can seep in from soil anywhere around or under a home, regardless of whether your home has a basement, a crawl space, or is built slab-on-grade. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Surgeon General recommend radon testing for all types of homes. In multi-level homes testing should be done on a level below the third floor.

“I don’t live in an area designated as a high radon zone, so my home won’t have a problem.”

The U.S. EPA and the U.S. Geologic Survey conducted surveys of radon potential across the United States. They broke the country down into three zones according to their potential for high indoor radon levels, with Zone 1 having the highest radon potential. It is true that homes in Zones 1 and 2 have a statistically higher chance of having elevated levels of radon. However, the fact is that elevated levels of radon have been found in homes *in all fifty states*. The radon level in your home depends on the geology under and near your home. The only way to know for sure, and to protect your family from radon, is to test your home.

“Two of my neighbors have tested their homes for radon and they don’t have high levels, so I probably don’t either.”

Radon levels can vary considerably from house to house, even on the same street. It is nearly impossible to predict the exact nature of geologic soil deposits and the extent to which soil gasses will seep into and be retained by a specific house. The only way to know whether radon exists in elevated levels in your home, and to protect your family from radon, is to test.

“There doesn’t seem to be much proof that radon is a serious health problem.”

The science on radon has been formidable over the years, but never before have we had such overwhelming scientific consensus that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans. In February of 1998, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) presented the findings of their Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation (BEIR) VI Report: "The Health Effects of Exposure to Indoor Radon." This new report by the NAS is the most definitive accumulation of scientific data on indoor radon. The report confirms that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. and that it is a serious public health problem. The study fully supports U.S. EPA estimates stating that radon causes between 15,000 and 22,000 lung cancer deaths per year.

“I don’t have time to test for radon!”

Testing is as simple as opening a package, placing a radon detector in your home in a designated area, and, after the prescribed number of days (typically two days), sealing the detector back in the package and mailing it to a lab. The whole process only takes a few minutes of your time!

Key Points for Spokespersons

Having a knowledgeable, personable spokesperson talk about radon and your radon activities is a great way to spread the word and promote action. It is important for spokespersons to know, in addition to the basic facts about radon, what types of messages tend to work. The basic radon facts can be found in the document in this supplement entitled “Reproducible Radon Fact Sheet.” The following document is a guide that provides you with hints about which key radon messages to deliver. The information here is based on our experience with past radon campaigns and public service announcements (PSAs).

“Radon is the 2nd Leading Cause of Lung Cancer in the United States”

Everyone knows that direct smoking is the nation's number one cause of lung cancer. But most people will be surprised to learn that radon exposure is the number two cause.

“Testing for Radon is Simple and Inexpensive”

People often attach an aura of mystery around radon and radon testing. Many suspect that radon testing will involve some complicated process that will cost them a lot of money. People are generally pleasantly surprised to learn that many radon test kits which meet EPA guidelines are priced under \$25.00 and are available at local hardware and home improvement stores. Information on how to purchase a radon detector is available from the state radon office or local health department by calling **[insert state radon or health department phone number here]**. Testing your home for radon is as simple as opening a package and following the instructions, which tell you to place a radon detector in a designated area, and, after the prescribed number of days, seal it back and mail it to a lab. Information on testing your home for radon and how to get a test kit is also available by calling 1-800-SOS-RADON.

“Radon Problems Can be Fixed”

A variety of methods can be used to reduce radon in homes. Sealing cracks and other openings in the foundation is a basic part of most approaches to radon reduction. EPA does not recommend the use of sealing and caulking alone to reduce radon because, by itself, sealing has not been shown to lower radon levels significantly or consistently. In most cases, systems with pipes and fans are used to reduce radon. Such systems are called “sub-slab depressurization”. These systems prevent radon gas from entering the home from below the concrete floor and the foundation. Similar systems can also be installed in homes with crawl spaces. Radon reduction contractors may use other methods that may also work in your home, depending on its design and other factors. Look in the Yellow Pages or call your state radon office to locate radon mitigators in your area.

The cost of making repairs to reduce radon depends on how your home was built and other factors. Most homes can be fixed for about the same cost as other common home repairs, like painting or having a new hot water heater installed. The average cost for a contractor to lower radon levels in a home is about \$1,200, although this can range from \$500 to about \$2,500.

“Take Steps Now to Protect Your Family from Radon!”

People will often do for their family and loved ones what they will not do for themselves. Emphasizing that testing for radon and fixing radon problems protects ‘*your family*’ tends to be more effective than saying ‘*protect yourself from radon.*’

Sample News Release to Announce Your Radon Activities

*To announce your radon campaign to the media, send them a news release. The sample release below can serve as a guide for creating your own. Be sure to time the release during or near National Radon Action Week (October 15-21, 2000). Or, if your radon campaign activities will occur during an alternate time (which is perfectly fine!), send this out to fit your schedule. Print the letter double spaced on your organization's stationary and fill in local information where **[indicated]**. You may also wish to tailor this release to announce a special event, press conference, or other campaign activity.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: **[Your name and phone number]**

[Community] ANNOUNCES CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT FAMILIES FROM RADON

Citizens Urged to Test Homes for Radon the Second Leading Cause of Lung Cancer in U.S.

[Your city, state, date] – **[Organization]** is aligned with the American Lung Association and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in a major campaign to educate Americans about the dangers of radon exposure and to encourage them to take action to identify and fix radon problems in their homes. To this end, **[organization]** is conducting **[briefly describe local radon action activities]**. The events are in conjunction with National Radon Action Week, which is October 15-21, 2000. National Radon Action Week kicks off with a Presidential Message from the White House asking Americans to take preventative action on this health risk. The purpose of the week is to draw attention to radon as a serious public health issue and, more importantly, to motivate Americans to take action to protect themselves from radon health effects. It is a health hazard that is present in elevated levels in about **[X]**% of **[area]** homes (**info available from state radon office**), which compares with over 6% of homes across all of America.

Radon is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless gas that is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor air, but when trapped in buildings, can be harmful at elevated levels. The science on radon has been formidable over the years, but never before have we had such overwhelming scientific consensus and robust data to support that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans.

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in February, 1998 presented the findings of their Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation (BEIR) VI Report: "The Health Effects of Exposure to Indoor Radon." This report by the NAS is the most definitive accumulation of scientific data on indoor radon. The report confirms that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. and that it is a serious public health problem. The NAS concluded that radon causes between 15,000 and 22,000 lung cancer deaths each year. "However," says **[spokesperson]** from **[organization]** "because you can't see or smell radon, people tend to minimize the health effects and ignore the possibility that it might exist in elevated levels in their homes."

Testing homes for elevated levels of radon is simple and inexpensive. And, if discovered, radon problems can be fixed. Radon test kits that meet EPA guidelines are available at local hardware

stores, home improvement stores, some supermarkets, other retail outlets, or directly from a laboratory. Information on how to purchase a radon detector is available from your state's radon office. Many are priced under \$25.00. Radon problems can be fixed by qualified contractors for a cost similar to that for many common home repairs such as painting or having a new water heater installed (anywhere from \$500 to about \$2,500).

[Organization] urges **[area]** residents to take action during this year's National Radon Action Week by testing their homes for elevated levels of radon. It is a serious public health hazard with a straightforward solution. For more information on radon, radon testing, and radon mitigation, call **[organization]** at **[organization's phone number]**.

Sample Proclamation By Local Official

*An effective way to stimulate action on radon is to enlist a well-known or popular local official to issue a proclamation stating that the county, city, or state supports taking action on radon during National Radon Action Week. Below is a sample proclamation that can serve as a guide for creating your own. Be sure to time the proclamation during or near National Radon Action Week (October 15-21, 2000). Or, if your radon campaign activities will occur during an alternate time (which is perfectly fine!), work with the local official such that the timing will fit your schedule. Be sure to fill in local information where **[indicated]**.*

[County Executive's, Mayor's, Governor's] Proclamation In Support of National Radon Action Week In [County, City, or State]

WHEREAS, radon is a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas that may threaten the health of our citizens and their families;

WHEREAS, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S.;

WHEREAS, any home in **[community]** may have elevated levels of radon (even if other homes in the same neighborhood do not);

WHEREAS, testing for radon is simple and inexpensive;

WHEREAS, identified radon problems can be fixed;

WHEREAS, **[your organization]** and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are supporting efforts to encourage Americans to test their homes for radon, have elevated levels of radon reduced, and have new homes built with radon-resistant features.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, **[name]**, **[title]**, or **[county, city, or state]** do hereby proclaim:

OCTOBER **[Dates]**, **[Year]**
Official National Radon Action Week
In **[County, City, or State]**

(Signature of Official)

Sample Letter Encouraging Local News Anchors to Test Their Homes for Radon

*Local news anchors are, in many ways, local celebrities. They are often perceived as friendly and trustworthy and can serve as excellent examples for radon activities. One way to capitalize on this is to encourage a local news anchor to publicly test their own home for radon. To set this up, you will need to send a letter to the anchor at their TV station. Use the sample letter below as a guide for creating your own. Be sure to print the letter on your organization's stationery and fill in local information where **[indicated]**. Be sure to follow up this letter with a phone call to answer any questions the anchor may have, and to schedule a meeting.*

Dear **[News Anchor]**

I am writing to request your participation in a National Radon Action Week activity that will ultimately help you to protect your family from the health risks posed by radon. National Radon Action Week kicks off with a Presidential Message from the White House asking Americans to take preventative action on this health risk. The purpose of the week is to draw attention to radon as a serious public health issue and, more importantly, to motivate Americans to take action to protect themselves from radon health effects. It is a health hazard that is present in elevated levels in about **[X]**% of **[area]** homes, which compares with over 6% of homes across all of America. Radon is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless gas that is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor air, but when trapped in buildings, can be harmful at elevated levels. The science on radon has been formidable over the years, but never before have we had such overwhelming scientific consensus and robust data to support that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans.

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Your popularity and credibility among **[area]** residents presents a tremendous opportunity to call attention to this serious public health issue. Our request is fairly straightforward and will require minimal effort on your part. Here is what we would like you to do:

- We would like to provide you and other Channel **[number]** News anchors with free radon test kits for your homes. We ask that you conduct a short-term radon test of your home. Testing is reliable when the instructions provided with the kit are followed and is as simple as opening a package, placing a radon detector in your home in a designated area, and, after the prescribed number of days, sealing the detector back in the package and mailing it to a lab.
- We will have the results of your radon test analyzed and share them with you. If the test indicates a high radon level, we will initiate a second, long-term test (which is just as simple as the short-term test) and will help you to determine whether your home needs any radon-resistant repairs. If you so desire, we will also recommend radon mitigation specialists.

- Finally, we would like you to publicize the results of your tests on one of your newscasts during this year's National Radon Action Week, which is October 15-21, 2000. This would involve having you explain how simple it was to test, how straightforward the results were, and, if applicable, how straightforward mitigation is. We would encourage you to videotape the testing process and can arrange for lab experts to discuss the results on the air, if you so desire.

The message that needs to be conveyed is that testing homes for elevated levels of radon is simple and inexpensive. And, if discovered, radon problems can be fixed. **[Area]** residents need to be informed about radon, radon testing, and about what to do if they discover that their home has elevated levels of radon.

An effective way to share this message might be to include a discussion or interview during the broadcast, between you and **[Spokesperson]** , **[organization's]** radon expert. **[He/she]** can explain to your viewers the facts about radon, radon testing, and making repairs to a home with an elevated radon level. **[He/She]** can also answer typical questions such as: Is testing complicated? Expensive? How long does it take? Are repairs expensive? What is involved? Can I do it myself or should I hire someone?

It is clear from watching your program that Channel **[number]** is concerned about the people of **[your community]**. We hope you will participate in our efforts, which are in conjunction with those of the American Lung Association and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to educate Americans about the dangers of radon exposure and to encourage them to take action to identify and fix radon problems in their homes.

We will be in touch during the week of **[date]** to answer any questions you may have and to determine your interest in participating in this activity.

Thank you for your consideration of this serious public health issue.

Sincerely, **[your name and title]**

Conducting a Radon Challenge

One way to stimulate action on radon is to capitalize on friendly rivalries that exist in your community by having schools or other rival organizations issue radon challenges to each other. The ideas below are written with a radon challenge between schools in mind, but can be tailored and utilized for challenges between other organizations such as sports teams or merchants.

What is a Radon Challenge?

A radon challenge is when one group of people challenges another to find out which one can conduct the most radon tests in a specified time. It can be an effective way to encourage families to test their homes for radon. Keep in mind that the challenge can be applied to as big an area – school, neighborhood, or city – as your organization has the time and resources to support.

Steps to Take to Initiate a Radon Challenge

1. Contact a radon test kit manufacturer (a list can be obtained from your state radon office) and arrange for them to supply kits, perhaps at a discounted price, for challenge participants. The manufacturer may agree to supply the kits for free as long as he or she can recover costs through the results analysis fee to be paid by each participating family.
2. Identify four or five schools in your area that you would like to participate. This activity is appropriate for all levels of schools, from grade school through high school. You may wish to start with more schools than you need, in case some drop out.
3. Write to the administrators of those schools, encouraging them to participate and identify a teacher who will take the lead on the challenge. The letter should contain the following general points:
 - < request school's participation in radon challenge;
 - < briefly explain what radon is and what its health effects are;
 - < mention timing the challenge with National Radon Action Week;
 - < tell them you are also contacting other area school administrators requesting their participation;
 - < list the basics of what's involved in the challenge, including the support to be provided by your organization;
 - < say that you'll be in touch to discuss the proposal in person.

You may also wish to refer to other letters in this supplement for text ideas.

4. Supply the teacher/coordinator at each participating school with the following:
 - < test kits;
 - < educational materials on radon;
 - < fact sheets on radon;
 - < a note to parents about the challenge.

The note to parents should contain the following general points:

- < explain the school's involvement in the radon challenge;
- < briefly explain what radon is and what its health effects are;
- < explain what the challenge entails, what will be asked of them, and what support will be provided.

You may also wish to include some of the 'radon messages that work' from those listed in the document in this supplement called "Key Points for Spokespersons."

5. Make contact with and offer to assist the teachers/coordinators in any way that you can. This may involve providing a speaker on radon or offering to provide volunteers to distribute materials.
6. Arrange for the administrators from the participating schools to formally issue the challenge to each other at the beginning of National Radon Action Week. (See "**Sample Text for a Radon Challenge**" that follows this list) In tandem with issuance of the challenge, notify the press by phone and mail (see the document in this supplement entitled "**Sample Release to Announce your Radon Activities**"). Invite members of the press to an "opening ceremony" for the challenge, perhaps to be held at a community building or park. Include members of the student publications staff at each participating school. Be sure to provide all members of the press with those materials you provided to challenge participants.
7. Keep track of the number of radon test kits received by the manufacturer for analysis. Be sure each test kit or package is coded by school, so that they can be easily tallied.
8. At the end of the challenge, announce the number of test kits ordered from and returned to the manufacturer. You may wish to assign more points for finished tests and fewer for test kit orders. It may also be more fair to choose a winner based on percentage of the student body whose families tested for radon or ordered kits. This way larger schools do not automatically have an advantage. Announce the radon challenge winner and inform local media. You may consider announcing the winner at a small 'closing ceremony' where representatives from each participating school are present and available to the media for comment on the challenge.
9. Try to get a local retailer to donate a prize for the winning school, such as books, computers, sports equipment, audio-visual equipment, etc. Be sure to also publicize the retailer's donation of the prize along with the announcement of the winner.

Sample Letter to The Editor of Your Local Newspaper

Local newspapers provide a unique vehicle for reaching a large number of people in your community while maintaining a local flavor. The issues in a local newspaper speak directly to area residents, and this can be an effective way to promote radon action. Use the sample letter below as a guide for creating your own. Be sure to time the mailing such that the letter will appear in the paper during or near National Radon Action Week (October 15-21, 2000). Also remember to print the letter on your organization's stationary and fill in local information where **[indicated]**.

Dear Editor,

October 15-21, 2000 is National Radon Action Week. National Radon Action Week kicks off with a Presidential Message from the White House asking Americans to take preventive action on this health risk. The purpose of the week is to draw attention to radon as a serious public health issue and to motivate Americans to take action to protect themselves from radon health effects. It is a health hazard that is present in about **[X]**% of **[area]** homes, which compares with over 6% of homes across all of America.

Radon is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless gas that is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor air, but when trapped in buildings, can be harmful at elevated levels. The science on radon has been formidable over the years, but never before have we had such overwhelming scientific consensus and robust data to support that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans.

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in February, 1998 presented the findings of their Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation (BEIR) VI Report: "The Health Effects of Exposure to Indoor Radon." This report by the NAS is the most definitive accumulation of scientific data on indoor radon. The report confirms that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. and that it is a serious public health problem. The NAS concluded that radon causes between 15,000 and 22,000 lung cancer deaths each year. However, because you can't see or smell radon, people tend to minimize the health effects and ignore the possibility that it might exist in elevated levels in their homes.

Testing homes for elevated levels of radon is simple and inexpensive, and if discovered, radon problems can be fixed. Radon test kits that meet EPA guidelines can be obtained from a radon testing company or laboratory. Get a listing from your state radon office or local health department by calling **[insert state radon or health department phone number here]**. They are available at local hardware stores and home improvement stores. Many are priced under \$25.00. Testing your home for radon is as simple as opening a package, placing a radon detector in a designated area, and, after the prescribed number of days, sealing the detector back in the package and mailing it to a lab. Information on testing your home for radon and how to get a test kit is also available by calling 1-800-SOS-RADON.

[Organization] is the **[local]** affiliate of **[national organization]**. **[Organization]** is aligned with the American Lung Association and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in an effort to educate Americans about the dangers of radon exposure and to encourage them to take action to identify and fix radon problems in their homes. To this end, **[organization]** is conducting **[describe local radon action activities]**. The U.S. EPA is also conducting a national public service advertising campaign in conjunction with these efforts.

[Organization] urges **[area]** residents to take action during this year's National Radon Action Week by testing their homes for elevated levels of radon. It is a serious public health hazard with a straightforward solution. For more information on radon, radon testing, and radon mitigation, call **[organization]** at **[organization's phone number]**.

Sincerely,
[your name and title]

Working with Your Utility Company

Utility companies are well known entities with a local flavor that reach a large number of area consumers on a regular basis. One way to encourage people to test their homes for radon might be a well-timed information mailer delivered via your local utility company bill. National Radon Action Week is in October, which is an excellent time to inform residents about radon as they prepare their homes for the winter. Below are some ideas on how to work with your local utility company to arrange for a radon bill-stuffer.

General Tips for Working with Your Utility Company

- < When designing the bill stuffer, use the effective messages cited in the document in this supplement entitled “Key Points for Spokespersons.” Also, include a source (your organization) for more information on radon somewhere in the text of the stuffer.
- < Help design a bill stuffer that is consistent with the style of the utility company's past bill stuffers and have it read as a message from the utility company to its customers.
- < Ideally, the stuffer would fit into the envelope without having to be folded and would not increase the postage of the overall mailing. With this in mind, keep the wording concise.
- < Work with a local printer to get the printing done at a reduced cost if the utility company does not offer to cover printing costs.
- < See the “Sample letter to Utility Company” after this page.
- < In the event that the utility company is not willing to sponsor a bill stuffer, suggest that they print a special National Radon Action Week message on the bills they send out in the fall. The message might read something like:

“Keep heat in and radon out this winter! Test your home for radon during National Radon Action Week, October **[dates]**. Call **[number]** for more information on radon.”

Remind the utility company that providing such a public service message is one way to show their customers that they care.
- < Another idea is to have the utility company include a short blurb about radon or National Radon Action Week in the regular customer newsletter that many utility companies publish.

Sample Letter to Utility Company

Dear **[Director of Community/Public Relations]**

I am writing to request your participation in a National Radon Action Week activity that will ultimately help you to protect families in your community from the health risks posed by radon. National Radon Action Week kicks off with a Presidential Message from the White House asking Americans to take preventative action on this health risk. The purpose of the week is to draw attention to radon as a serious public health issue and, more importantly, to motivate Americans to take action to protect themselves from radon health effects. It is a health hazard that is present in elevated levels in about **[X]**% of **[area]** homes, which compares with over 6% of homes across all of America. Radon is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless gas that is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor air, but when trapped in buildings, can be harmful at elevated levels. The science on radon has been formidable over the years, but never before have we had such overwhelming scientific consensus and robust data to support that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans.

In February of this year, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) presented the findings of their Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation (BEIR) VI Report: "The Health Effects of Exposure to Indoor Radon." This new report by the NAS is the most definitive accumulation of scientific data on indoor radon. The report confirms that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. and that it is a serious public health problem. The NAS concluded that radon causes between 15,000 and 22,000 lung cancer deaths each year.

We would like to explore your interest in providing a printed message in your customers' **[specify months]** bills about the pressing need for them to test their homes. As the cold weather approaches and your customers begin to winterize their homes, we would like to encourage them to keep the heat in and the radon out.

[Your organization] believes that **[utility company]** can make a real difference in protecting public health. We will be certain to publicize your support and are confident that this effort will go far toward building goodwill among your customers. **[Your organization]** will provide all the information needed for a small bill stuffer to be included in your **[months]** mailing. Please also feel free to include our phone number on the bill stuffer as a source of additional information on radon.

We will be in touch during the week of **[date]** to answer any questions you may have and to determine your interest in participating in this activity.

Thank you for your consideration of this serious public health issue.

Sincerely, **[your name and title]**

Sample Letter to Radio and Television Program Producers

*One effective way to promote radon action during and after National Radon Action Week is to have a knowledgeable, personable spokesperson make a guest appearance on radio or television interviews. To set this up, contact the radio and TV program producers. Use the sample letter below as a guide for creating your letter. Print the letter on your organization's stationary and fill in local information where **[indicated]**. Be sure to follow up this letter with a phone call to answer any questions the producers may have, and to schedule the interview.*

Dear **[Producer]**

I am writing to request your participation in a National Radon Action Week activity that will ultimately help you to protect your family and **[area]** families from the health risks posed by radon. National Radon Action Week kicks off with a Presidential Message from the White House asking Americans to take preventive action on this health risk. The purpose of the week is to draw attention to radon as a serious public health issue and, more importantly, to motivate Americans to take action to protect themselves from radon health effects.

Radon is a health hazard that is present in elevated levels in about **[X]**% of **[area]** homes, which compares with over 6% of homes across all of America. It is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless gas that is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor air, but when trapped in buildings, can be harmful at elevated levels. The science on radon has been formidable over the years, but never before have we had such overwhelming scientific consensus and robust data to support that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans.

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in February, 1998 presented the findings of their Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation (BEIR) VI Report: "The Health Effects of Exposure to Indoor Radon." This report by the NAS is the most definitive accumulation of scientific data on indoor radon. The report confirms that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. and that it is a serious public health problem. The NAS concluded that radon causes between 15,000 and 22,000 lung cancer deaths each year.

Testing homes for elevated levels of radon is simple and inexpensive. Radon problems can be fixed. **[Area]** residents need to be informed about radon, radon testing, and about what to do if they discover their home has a radon problem. **[Spokesperson]** from **[organization]** can explain to your **[listeners/viewers]** the facts about radon, radon testing, and making repairs to a home with an elevated radon level. **[He/She]** can also answer typical questions such as: Is testing complicated? Expensive? How long does it take? Are repairs expensive? What is involved? Can I do it myself or should I hire someone?

[Organization] is the **[local]** affiliate of **[national organization]**. We are aligned with the American Lung Association and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in an effort to educate Americans about the dangers of radon exposure and to encourage them to take action to identify and fix radon problems in their homes. To this end, **[organization]** is conducting **[describe local radon action activities]**. The U.S. EPA is also conducting a national public service advertising campaign in conjunction with these efforts.

Please consider having **[spokesperson]** appear as a guest on your **[radio/TV]** station to discuss the health effects of radon and how **[area]** residents can take steps to protect themselves. As you will note from the attached biographical sketch **[he/she]** has considerable expertise in this area and is skilled in translating sometimes complicated scientific recommendations into practical suggestions for the general public.

You will find additional information on **[organization]** and **[local campaign]** enclosed. We will be in touch soon to answer any questions you may have and to determine your interest in having **[spokesperson]** as a guest.

Thank you for your consideration of this serious public health issue.

Sincerely,
[your name and title]

General Ideas for Radon Action

The following is a list of ideas for radon activities. Use them to develop actual radon projects or to get started on brainstorming your own ideas. Don't feel limited by what's listed below – talk to your managers, colleagues, and friends to get their ideas. Be creative and have some fun with your radon activities!

Promote the “Radon Test” PSAs

Send, or even better, hand-deliver the “Radon Test” PSAs to local TV and radio stations and enthusiastically promote their use. We hope this is already on your to-do list!

Capitalize on Local Celebrities

Piggyback with the national distribution of the “Radon Test” PSAs to broadcast local celebrities taking the radon test or conducting radon tests in their homes. People to include might be the mayor, police chief, or top health official of a town; a local sports hero, news anchor or restaurateur; or even someone visibly involved in the school system or local politics.

Connect with Local Businesses

- < Secure commitments from owners of your local hardware store or area home improvement store to run and advertise a sale on radon test kits during National Radon Action Week (or whatever time frame works best with your radon campaign). Offer to support them by providing a radon expert to make a store appearance during the sale and talk with customers about radon.
- < Work with the mall marketing director to arrange for a mall display during National Radon Action Week. You may also wish to bolster the impact of the display by arranging for a radon spokesperson to make scheduled appearances at the display to talk with mall shoppers. (Recall, too, that mall traffic and retail activity tend to be very high in the fall)

Work with High Schools

- < Contact the science departments of your local high schools to arrange for a guest lecturer on radon. Be prepared to send an informed, energetic representative to deliver the lecture and answer questions.
- < Conduct a radon challenge among high schools or high school sports teams. (See “How to Conduct a Radon Challenge”)
- < Develop a lesson plan on radon, radon health effects, the radioactive decay chain, etc. Distribute it to high school science teachers and ask them for feedback when they use it in class.

Work with Doctors or Hospitals

Find a way to partner with local doctors' offices or hospitals. One possibility is to assemble a radon information kit that might include things like a basic radon fact sheet or a radon collateral item and request that they distribute it to their patients.